

AYURVEDIC POSTPARTUM CARE: THE SCIENCE AND TRADITION OF SUTIKA
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ABSTRACT

Sutika Paricharya in Ayurveda refers to the specialized postnatal care and regimen prescribed for a woman who has just given birth, known as "sutika." This ancient system emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to postnatal care, addressing physical, mental, and emotional well-being to ensure optimal recovery and long-term health of both the mother and the newborn. Sutika Paricharya includes dietary guidelines, lifestyle recommendations, herbal medicines, and specific therapeutic procedures designed to balance the doshas (vital energies) and restore the body's natural equilibrium. Sutika Paricharya is not only about physical recovery but also emphasizes mental and emotional support through practices like meditation, ensuring a supportive environment for the new mother. This comprehensive approach is rooted in the belief that proper postnatal care has profound implications for the mother's long-term health, the well-being of the child, and future pregnancies. In conclusion, Sutika Paricharya offers a detailed and integrative framework for postnatal care that addresses the multifaceted needs of a new mother, promoting holistic health and well-being.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Postnatal Care, Puerperium, Sutika Kala, Sutika Paricharya.

INTRODUCTION

Sutika Paricharya refers to the postnatal care regimen in Ayurveda, aimed at promoting the health and well-being of the mother after childbirth. This traditional practice emphasizes the importance of diet, rest, and specific therapies to restore the mother's physical and mental health. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical system, provides detailed guidelines for postpartum care, recognizing the profound impact of childbirth on a woman's body and mind. With growing interest in integrative and holistic approaches to postpartum care, understanding and scientifically evaluating Sutika Paricharya is crucial. Sutika Paricharya includes dietary guidelines, lifestyle recommendations, herbal medicines, and specific therapeutic procedures designed to balance the doshas (vital energies) and restore the body's natural equilibrium. Dietary guidelines are pivotal, recommending easily digestible, warm, and nourishing foods to aid in recovery, enhance lactation, and prevent digestive disorders. Lifestyle practices focus on adequate rest, gentle physical activity, and avoidance of stress. Herbal formulations and decoctions are employed to strengthen the uterus, promote healing, and enhance overall vitality. Specific therapeutic practices, such as

abhyanga (oil massage) and swedana (steam), are also advocated to alleviate postpartum discomfort and rejuvenate the body.

METHODS

This study involved a comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, to extract detailed descriptions of Sutika Paricharya. Additionally, contemporary research articles were reviewed to assess the scientific basis and potential benefits of these practices. Databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and AYUSH Research Portal were searched using keywords like "Sutika Paricharya," "postnatal care in Ayurveda," and "Ayurvedic postpartum practices."

RESULTS

Sutika

The word Sutika is used to describe the postnatal woman and it is derived from the basic sanskrit element 'Su' with meaning 'to produce' or 'to yield'. A woman who has just given birth to a child followed by expulsion of the placenta is called as Sutika.^[1]

Sutika kala^[2]

ACHARYA	SUTIKA KALA
Acharya charak ^[3]	Sutika kala is not exactly mentioned
Acharya susruta ^[4]	1 1/2 months i.e. 45 days
Astanga sangraha ^[5]	1 1/2 months i.e. 45 days or up to recurrence of menses
Acharya Hridaya ^[5]	1 1/2 months i.e. 45 days or up to recurrence of menses
Acharya Kasyapa ^[6]	6 months
Acharya Bhavaprakasha ^[7]	1 1/2 months i.e. 45 days or up to recurrence of menses
Acharya Yogratnakara ^[8]	1 1/2 months i.e. 45 days or up to recurrence of menses

Sutika Paricharya Sidhanta (Principles of Sutika Paricharya)**Samanya Sutika Paricharya**

- **Abhyanga & Udara vestana-** Massage with Ksheera bala taila and Swedana (cloth dipped in hot water and wrapped on the abdomen) this wrapping procedure helps in compression of abdomen & to reduce the extra space in the stomach. Hence abhyanga is Vatahamaka chikitsa.
- **Prasuta snana-** Hot water bath in morning & evening (hot water shower bath is very helpful according to Dalhana). After bath only, she should take meals i.e. Ghrita or milk with rice.
- **Swedana of Yoni-** According to Kashyapa puerperal woman should always sit in small chair covered with leather-bag filled with hot Bala taila. With this her yoni (uterus, vagina, vulva) becomes healthy. Sudation in the yoni should be given. After proper sudation, hot water bath followed by rest should be given thus becoming free from tiredness.

- **Udara abhyanga** -Up to one-month Udara abhyanga with Ghrita or Bala taila, cloth Sweda, hot water bath is necessary.

- She should avoid exercise, anger and coitus.

Diet of Sutika

Considering the strength of digestive fire of Sutika, scum of boiled rice should be given for 3 or 5 days then 6th or 7th day salt free gruel mixed with little quantity of oil and Ghrita, Sneha dravya with Pippali (Piper longum) and Nagara (Cyperus rotundus) should be given. Then on 9th day use of rice gruel mixed with sufficient quantity of salt, Sneha dravya (oil and Ghrita), the meat soup of wild animals, should be taken, then soup of Kulattha (Dolichos biflorus Linn.) mixed with Sneha dravya salt and sour substances, also Kushmanda (Benincasa hispida), radish, cucumber etc. vegetable fried in Ghrita should be used.

SAMHITA	Ahara	VIHARA
Charaka Samhita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ghrita, taila vasa, majja medicated with pippali (piper longum linn), Pippalimula, chavya (piper retrofractum Vahl) ➤ Chitraka (plumbago zeylanica Linn, shunthi(Zingiber officinale Rose)- Susnigdha yavagu (liquid gruel of rice) medicated with above mentioned drug for 5-7 days ➤ Aapyayna (vrnhana chikitsa) - From 6th or 8th day^[9] 	<p>Snehapana (consumption of fat) Abhyanga (massage) with taila or ghrita. Udarveshtana (abdominal tightening) Parishechana (hot water pouring)</p>
Sushruta Samhita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Snehayavagu or kshirayavagu medicated with drugs of Vidarigandhadi (Desmodium gangetium etc.) gana From 3rd or 4th to 6th or 7th days. ➤ Mansrasa of Jangal Mans medicated with yava (Vulgaris sativus), kola (Ziziphus mauritiana), kulatth (Dolichos biflorus) with cooked Shali rice From 7th or 8th day to sutikakala^[10] 	<p>Abhyanga (massage) with Bala taila. Parishechana (hot water pouring) with or vatahara aushadhisiddha kwatha. Dushashonitshuddhi by taking Pippali, Pippalimula, Hastapippali, chitraka, srngabera with ushna gudodaka Woman should avoid anger, exercise and coitus</p>
AshtangSngraha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Liquid yavagu prepared with either milk or vidaryadigana (Puerariatuberosaetc.) drugs For 3, 5 or 7 days. ➤ Laghu aahara ➤ Yusha of Yava (Vulgaris sativus), kola (Ziziphus mauritiana) and Kullattha (Dolichos biflorus) From 4th, 6th or 8th day to 12th day. ➤ Jangala mamsa rasa From 13th to 	<p>Abhyanga (massage) with bala taila Snehapana (consumption of fat) Udarveshtana(abdominal tightening) after massage of abdomen with taila or ghrita. Parishechana with ushnodaka (hot water pouring) in morning and evening before sneha and yavagu pana</p>

	sutikaKala ^[11]	
AshtangHridya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Panchakola (Piper longum, Piper longum's root, Piper retrofractum, Plumbagozeylanica, and Zingiber officinale) siddhapeya for first 3 days, ➤ Vidaryadigana (Pueraria tuberosa etc.) kwatha siddha snehayuktayavagu or kshirayavagu from 4th – 7th day, after that Gradually ➤ Brimhana diet from 8 –12th day, mamsa rasa should be used after 12th day^[12] 	Almost similar description as Ashtanga Sangraha. Abhyanga of yoni is also included
KashyapSamhita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pippali (Piper longum), nagar (Zingiber officinalis) yukta and saindhava rahita alpa Sneha yukta yavagu for first 3 or 5days, then sasneha lavana yavagu, then ➤ Sasneha-lavana-amlayuktakulattha (Dolichosbiflorus) yush with meat soup of wild animals and ➤ ghrita bhrishta Kushmanda (Benincasahispida), and moolaka (Raphanusativus)^[13] 	Abhyanga of back, pressure of abdomen and flanks, then udarveshtana. Sitting over a small chair covered with leather bag filled with hot bala (Sidacordifolia) taila, then sudation in the yoni with oleo prepared with priyangu (Callicarpa macrophylla) etc. Hot water bath after proper sudation, Fumigation with kushtha (Saussurealappa), guggulu (Commiphoramukul) and agaru (Aquilariaagallocha) mixed with ghrita.
HaritSamhita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Upavasa on Day 1 ➤ Ushnakulattha (Dolichosbiflorus) yush on 2nd day, ➤ Panchkola (Piper longum, root of Piper longum, Piper retrofractum, Plumbago zeylanica, Zingiber officinale) yavagu on 3rd day, Chaturjataka (Cinnamomum zeylanicum, Elettaria cardamomum, leaves of Cinnamomum zeylanicum, Mesuaferrea) mixed yavagu on 4th day, cooked rice of shali or shastika on 5th day^[14] 	Vaginal filling with oil and Massage followed by sudation with hot water.

DISCUSSION

The practices described in Sutika Paricharya align with modern understandings of postpartum care, emphasizing the need for adequate nutrition, rest, and mental health support. The dietary recommendations in Ayurveda address common postpartum issues such as constipation, low energy levels, and lactation problems. The emphasis on warm, easily digestible foods and avoidance of cold substances promotes optimal digestive function, which is critical during the postpartum period. Rest and restricted physical activity resonate with current medical advice, highlighting the need for the mother to recover from the physical and emotional stresses of childbirth. Ayurvedic therapies like Abhyanga are increasingly recognized for their benefits in improving blood circulation, reducing stress, and promoting overall well-being. The scientific basis for these practices is supported by contemporary research. For instance, Shatavari's role in enhancing lactation and supporting postpartum recovery is well-documented. Similarly, the benefits of oil massage (Abhyanga) in reducing stress and promoting relaxation are supported by modern studies on massage therapy.

CONCLUSION

Sutika Paricharya offers a comprehensive framework for postpartum care that integrates dietary, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions to support the mother's

recovery. While deeply rooted in traditional knowledge, many of its recommendations are supported by contemporary research and can be incorporated into modern postnatal care practices. Further empirical studies are needed to validate and refine these practices, ensuring they meet current medical standards and effectively contribute to maternal health.

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